

## Ms Gigi Tung Oi-lai

Ms Gigi Tung Oi-lai is best known as the founder of Bo Charity Foundation Limited and its seminal project, Food Angel. Founded in 2010, it started as a registered charitable organisation and in 2011, with the goal of promoting “Waste Not Hunger Not”, it initiated a food rescue and assistance program titled Food Angel. This program endeavors to rescue edible food surplus from local food industry and recycle the rescued food items into nutritious meals, to be served warm under a strict food safety protocol, for the needy in the community.

It all started with a kind thought. In 2010, Ms Tung noticed that some 300,000 elders live in poverty and could not afford to have adequate or healthy meals in Hong Kong. Yet ironically, news about the amount of food wasted in Hong Kong is shocking. She immediately acted on it and contacted catering and supermarket businesses for a generous donation of their food surplus daily to champion her cause. At first, she simply reheated the food collected from catering providers in a community center in Sham Shui Po and served about 20 meals to those in need there. The scale of her program has now been expanded to preparing and distributing over 6000 meals daily, with 1000 bowls of soups, for more than 150 local charities, rescuing over 1020 tons of food from landfills annually. While more than 80% of the meals are distributed daily to the elderly, 20% of them will be given to low-income families, unemployed, and the disabled in Hong Kong. The Foundation started running centralised kitchens in Sham Shui Po and Chai Wan to better process and serve food closer to the needy. Together with her colleagues, Ms Tung has widened their scope from elderly care to providing community-wide services.

Ms Tung’s determination to conduct elderly care can be attributed to her parents’ values and teachings. Her father, Mr Tung Wai, an eminent businessman, widely known as ‘the father of stock market’, had taught her at a young age to practise the time-honored Chinese tradition of filial piety. She learned from the model of her parents in the way through which they care for, and spend time with, their elders. This is something she takes to heart and practise to the full. Besides, her Christian faith has also reminded her of the need to serve the poor. Realising that what the elderly needs is not simply money and food, Ms Tung broadened her scope of services by setting up a community centre in Sham Shui Po in which the elders in the neighborhood can make use of its day-care services and participate in its interest classes and activities.

Family has always been Ms Tung’s top priorities, and that’s also what motivated her in the business of food recycling. Upon graduating from Pui Ching Middle School, Ms Tung followed her sister’s footsteps and studied Finance at University of Western Ontario, Canada. After graduation, she first worked in a securities company, but later realised Finance does not interest her. She soon found her passion in the retail business, but had to quit when she became pregnant. In retrospect, taking care of her two daughters was a blessing in disguise. It was around that time that Ms Tung started doing charity work, and the child caring experience had dawned on her the importance of physical and mental health for children. She found My Gym Children’s Fitness Center with the goal of introducing innovative programmes for the physical development of children, while educating the next generation to treasure food and resources. This is challenging in a highly consumerist society. However, she believes that these important messages—relating to caring for the elderly and conserving for the environment—should be communicated to young people the soonest possible. Rather than feeling frustrated over not utilising her talents in commerce, Ms Tung chose to respond to her maternal instincts by promoting a sense of care for others, because she thinks women are more sensitive to the interests and needs of people around them.

The success of Food Angel proved yet again the wisdom and valuable lessons we could learn from failures ahead of success. Ms Tung remarks that her modest achievement was simply being aware of the needs of the society and responding to it. She hopes that people can relate Food Angel as a caring organisation. The core of its service is to serve food to the needy while promoting love and care for the community.

Ms Tung has a message for our graduates and young people. “You need to go and reach out to people in society, have real interaction with others rather than relying on cyber-contact alone. Make an effort to understand our society, to work hard and sustain for your goal, regardless of short-term setbacks. You will be happy and successful, if and only if you strive towards your goals.”

Mr Chairman, for her dedication to the charity work of helping the underprivileged and her contribution to bettering the society, may I present Ms Gigi Tung to you for conferment of an honorary fellowship.

*English citation written and delivered by Professor Lisa Leung*